

To: Players and their Parents

There is no single “magic food” that will help players feel stronger, train harder or compete better. However, every food that you eat – in combination with when you eat – can affect athletic performance. Remember, there is a direct correlation between diet and athletic performance. I also recognize that there is a direct correlation between diet and happiness. If it makes your son/daughter happy to eat an enormous double bacon cheeseburger every once in a while, let them do so. Sacrificing things you really enjoy for soccer will eventually make you resent soccer. You will find, however, that a proper diet will make your son/daughter feel better and will help them recover faster from practices and games; but a few treats along the way won’t slow the boys/girls down too much and will keep them happier.

Per your request, here are a few sports nutrition tips, (I added a few from last season), which will help your boys/girls eat to win.

MATCH/TOURNAMENT: NUTRITIONAL GUIDELINES

Sweets and Sugary Foods:

Eating lots of sweets and sugary foods for “quick energy” before you exercise may hurt performance. Here’s why: After you eat any kind of concentrated sugar (i.e. dried fruit, juices, soft drinks, jelly beans, etc.), your body secretes insulin – a hormone that carries the sugar into the muscles. Exercise, like insulin also helps carry sugar into the muscles. The combined effect of insulin with exercise can cause your blood sugar to drop abnormally low. Players may experience hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and feel light headed, shaky, tired and uncoordinated. If you’re craving energy boost prior to practice or a game, try a simple snack of crackers or bread to perk you up. Remember, sugar is already stored in your muscles in the form of glycogen.

What and When to eat:

Pre-match meals should be consumed 1.5 – 3.0 hours before a game. Below are some suggestions: Targeted caloric intake 300- 500 calories.

Morning:

Cold Meal: Cereal: Cheerios, Grape Nuts, Raisin Bran, Oatmeal. Fruit: Banana, Melon, Grapes unsweetened juice. PLEASE, NO SUGAR SMACKS, FROSTED MINI WHEATS, FRUIT LOOPS, ETC.) These cereals contain over 40% sugar.

Hot Meal: French toast, wheat toast, buttered bagel, hard roll, bran or corn muffins, pancakes. Avoid eggs, hash browns, bacon and sausage.

Afternoon:

Find a deli that offers wholesome bread and request a sandwich that emphasizes the bread rather than the filling. Turkey on wheat or rye or a Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwich is good. If you are not hungry or if the match schedule is too close to get in a proper meal, drink a Slim Fast – any flavor is okay.

After the Match:

(Targeted caloric intake 200- 400 calories within 2 hours of a game) Sports drinks at full strength. Granola Bars, Orange Juice, Bananas and other carbohydrate rich foods. **NO BURGERS (HOT DOGS TOO) AND FRIES PLEASE.** You need to replace the glycogen that you burned off and foods rich in carbohydrates are the best source. Pasta is great but this may not be easily accessible. **DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR RECOVERY DIET.**

Hydration:

NO SODA. The day before a competition, drink lots of extra water to be sure your body is well hydrated. The morning of the event, drink 2-3 large glasses of fluids up to 2 hours prior to game time. Since the kidneys require 90 minutes to process the liquids, this will allow time for you to empty your bladder before the start of the game. Five to ten minutes before game time, tank up on another 1-2 cups of water.

During hard exercise, drink as much as you can, ideally 8-10 ounces every 20 minutes. **PLEASE DRINK BEFORE YOU ARE THIRSTY.** By the time your brain signals thirst, you will have lost 1% of your body weight. By 2% dehydration, you may have reduced your work capacity by 10-15%.

Sports Drinks:

Sports drinks are rich in carbohydrates and should be consumed at full strength only after the game. Pre game and during a match, water only. If you want to lace your water with a sports drink for flavor this is okay. The ratio of sports drink to water should be about 1 part sports drink to 5 parts water.

Eating Out While Traveling:

The Winners:

- Sizzler Steak House: This is far and away the best place to eat, great salad bar, great soups, various meats and meatless sauces, fresh fruits and refills on drinks.
- The Olive Garden and/or The Spaghetti Factory: This is an Italian Restaurant food chain that is terrific.

- Wendy's: If you have to eat fast food Wendy's has a nice salad bar, baked potatoes, and a broiled chicken sandwich that is fine.

The Runner –Ups

- Denny's: Good for breakfast.
- Bob's Big Boy: Good breakfast buffet.
- International House of Pancakes: Hold the whipped cream – keep it simple.
- Subway: Hold the mayo and keep the oils to a minimum.

The Losers

- McDonald's, Burger King, and Jack in the Box: I can think of no worse place to eat prior to competition than at McDonald's. Ronald McDonald is not your friend.
- Taco Bell: What could you seriously order at a Taco Bell? A chimichanga?
- Pizza Hut: Pizza takes too long to digest, stick to the salad bar.
- Kentucky Fried Chicken or Popeye's: Yes, chicken is low in fat, but by the time the KFC gets through with the breading and frying, there really isn't much chicken left.

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